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E.O. 11652. GDS

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: MORNING SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT REPORTS

1. CHINA: MAJOR CROP FAILURE

CONSULATE GENERAL HONG KONG REPORTS THAT CHINA'S CURRENT DROUGHT IS NOW BEING OFFICIALLY DESCRIBED AS THE WORST IN THE HISTORY OF THE PRC. CHINA'S STATE COUNCIL CONVENED AN EMERGENCY MEETING MARCH 19 TO MOBILIZE THE CIVILIAN POPULATION IN AN ANTI-DROUGHT CAMPAIGN, AND ON MARCH 22 ORDERED THE ARMY INTO URGENT ANTI-DROUGHT WORK. WHILE THE EFFECT OF THE DROUGHT WILL NOT BE FELT UNTIL THE SPRING HARVEST BEGINS IN LATE APRIL, ITS POTENTIAL IMPACT IS UNDERSCORED BY REPORTS THAT SOME AREAS ARE ALREADY FACING SERIOUS FOOD SHORTAGES AS A RESULT OF LAST YEAR'S POOR HARVEST.

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COMING ON THE HEELS OF THAT SHORTFALL, THE PROSPECT OF A FAILURE IN THE 1977 HARVEST CONFRONTS THE PRC WITH THE UNPLEASANT ALTERNATIVES OF:

--CUTTING BACK FURTHER ON FOOD RATIONS;

--DRAWING DOWN ITS STRATEGIC RESERVES; OR

--SHARPLY INCREASING GRAIN IMPORTS. (SECRET) HONG
KONG 3292 (NORFON WINTEL) 3/24.)

2. A SOCIALIST FRANCE IN A CAPITALIST EC?

EMBASSY PARIS CALLS ATTENTION TO AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANCOIS MITTERRAND IN THE MARCH 19 LE MONDE, IN WHICH THE FRENCH SOCIALIST LEADER APPEARS TO WARN THAT A FRANCE LED BY HIS LEFTIST COALITION WOULD FACE SERIOUS CLASHES WITH THE COMMON MARKET. MITTERRAND SAID THAT IF FRANCE'S EC PARTNERS TRIED TO OBLIGE IT TO MAINTAIN A LIBERAL CAPITALIST ECONOMY, "IT WILL NOT BE THE FRENCH LEFT WHICH WILL CRACK, BUT THE COMMON MARKET."

EMBASSY COMMENT: WHILE UNDOUBTEDLY MEANT FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION, MITTERRAND'S STATEMENTS ARE NEVERTHELESS SOME OF THE BLUNTEST LANGUAGE WE HAVE HEARD ABOUT HOW A FRANCE LED BY THE LEFT WOULD FIT INTO A EUROPE VEERING INCREASINGLY TO THE RIGHT. MITTERRAND AND THE TOP SOCIALIST LEADERS SAY THEY ARE FIRM EUROPEANISTS, BUT THE PARTY'S LEFT WING HAS BEEN WARNING THAT THE EC HAS THE POTENTIAL TO STIFLE THE ECONOMIC PROVISIONS OF THE COMMON PROGRAM. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) PARIS 8424, 3/22.)

3. SWAZIS END PARLIAMENTARY "WHITE MAN'S EXPERIMENT"

EMBASSY MBABANE REPORTS THAT THE KING OF SWAZILAND, RE-
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FLECTING A TRADITIONALIST DISLIKE OF WHAT HE CALLED "THE WHITE MAN'S EXPERIMENT," ANNOUNCED MARCH 22 THAT HIS COUNTRY WOULD END ITS BRITISH-IMPOSED SYSTEM OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND RETURN TO NOMINATIONS BASED ON TRIBAL CONSULTATIONS. KING SOBHUZA SAID MEMBERS OF THE CABINET AND PARLIAMENT WOULD BE REPLACED, AND URGED HIS PEOPLE TO NOMINATE UNEDUCATED RURAL AS WELL AS WESTERN-EDUCATED REPRESENTATIVES TO THE NEW LEGISLATURE.

EMBASSY COMMENT: THE KING'S MOVE WILL REINFORCE THE CONSERVATIVE BENT OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE TRADITIONAL "TINKHUNDLA" SYSTEM HE IS RESTORING, WHICH OBLIGES EVERYONE TO RETURN TO HIS RURAL FAMILY HOMESTEAD TO CONSULT WITH TRIBAL CHIEF, WILL BREAK UP THE YOUNG URBAN VOTING BLOCS THAT COMPRISE THE PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION. IT ALSO DISENFRANCHISES MOST WHITE SWAZIS AND BLACK NON-SWAZIS RESIDING HERE, WHO HAVE NO SUCH TRIBAL TIES. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) MBABANE 719, 3/24.)
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